



Acetone washing for substance users - a harm reduction tutorial

First, a disclaimer:



Without lab testing, you as a layman can only guess at purity and composition of substances.

Reagent color change tests can help to identify pure substances, but are unhelpful at identifying mixtures. Judging purity by weighing what you get out of a wash doesn't work, either— there's no guarantee that the residue is the drug that you think it is. Bioassay ("tasting it") isn't of any use because of the number of chemicals that can look and act similarly to each other. Acetone and other solvent washes are meant to remove certain cuts you know have been added (or impurities from the synthesis that weren't removed), not to purify or isolate amphetamine or cocaine out of a mystery mix (for purification of amphetamine out of mystery mixtures, acid/base extraction is the gold standard). You can send drugs— pills, powders, or pastes— to [Drugdata](#) or [Energy Control](#) if you want professional GC/MS testing—this is the only kind of test that will tell you exactly what substances are in your drug. It's anonymous and worth the money.

WARNING!



Acetone and other solvents are flammable and should never be used around sparks or open flames (refrigerators, freezers, electric motors, furnaces). The vapours are volatile and can flash back to the container and cause a boiling liquid expanding vapour explosion.

Always work with acetone in a well ventilated area and avoid inhaling the fumes. Have something to clean up spills, like vermiculite or cat litter (or paper towels or sawdust or something else absorbent) and wet it with cold water. Remember, acetone will eat many plastics, paints, and varnishes.

One simple method of cleaning your drugs is called an **acetone wash**. This will improve the purity of most drugs if done correctly, but will not get rid of most cuts that are drugs themselves. This is best used for cleaning out synthesis byproducts, caffeine, and bulking cuts that aren't active in their own right.

This does not work for any drugs that are in freebase form, like crack or DMT.

A non-exhaustive list of drugs it CAN help with:

- Methamphetamine

- Amphetamine
- Cocaine HCl (NOT freebase, i.e. crack!) (note also this will not remove levamisole!)
- MDMA
- 2-CB

How does this work? Well, the drugs you'd be washing in acetone aren't very soluble in acetone, if at all, but a lot of impurities that might be in your drugs are! So the aim is to get the stuff you DON'T want dissolved in the acetone, while the drugs you DO want are left behind.

Supplies:

- Acetone - you want this to be pure, no added ingredients! To test if your acetone is clean, pour a little bit onto a clean glass/ceramic/metal surface and see if it leaves residue behind when it evaporates. If it doesn't, you're good. Acetone that is sold as "100% acetone" will be pure enough (although it still contains water, see the acetone drying steps below).
- Syringe (5 mL or larger luer slip, or oral syringe, is ideal for this) and cotton filter (qtip is fine) OR coffee filters
- Clean glass/ceramic containers with lids
- Mortar and pestle (optional)

IF YOU ARE GOING TO DRY YOUR ACETONE (highly recommended):

- Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate - no added scents or other ingredients - for drying your acetone!)
- An oven or toaster oven
- A **sealable** jar to store your anhydrous acetone in

Why dry your acetone?

Dry acetone has no water in it. Water in your acetone is less than ideal because even a little bit will cause you to lose some of your drugs. Acetone likes to hold on to water, and most of the drugs you'd be washing this way are also pretty soluble in water—cocaine especially, at roughly 2 grams per mL of water! That would amount to 50 mg out of a gram if the acetone had 0.5% water content and you used 5 mL of acetone—maybe not a huge amount to sacrifice for many, but if you can avoid it by simply taking the time to dehydrate your acetone, why not? It can be time consuming but once it's done, it's done until you need to make another batch. Still, it is ultimately optional if you don't mind this potential loss.

How to dry it:

- Crush up epsom salts in your mortar and pestle and put them in the oven on high (400-450 degrees F, or 200-250 C) for 3-4 hours. This will take all the water out of the epsom salts, and they will now absorb water from the atmosphere, or your acetone. You'll know it's ready when it's stark white with no transparency remaining to it.
- Put the equivalent of roughly 1/5 of your container of acetone in dried epsom salts into the acetone container. It's best to do this immediately after the epsom salts have dried, because they will quickly begin absorbing moisture from the air.
- Give it a good shaking for about a minute, and let it sit for a day. Make sure the lid is tightly closed. You now have dry acetone!

Don't shake the container after this point prior to using! And make sure to keep it sealed when you're not using it - see end notes for further explanation.

WASHING:

- Crush your drugs finely and put them in an acetone-friendly container of appropriate size—a shot glass works if you're not washing a lot.
- Use your syringe to draw up the acetone, avoiding the epsom salt if you dried the acetone beforehand: 5-10 mL is recommended per gram of drug being washed at minimum, but more won't hurt if you think you need it. **(NOTE: if**

you store your acetone in the freezer and use it while it's cold, the minuscule amount of your actual drugs it may absorb will be even less!)

- Pour your acetone over your drugs, making sure there's plenty of room on top. The acetone will absorb impurities and some cuts, but not your drugs.
 - Stir it around a bit with an acetone friendly utensil (glass or metal) and let it sit for maybe 10 minutes. Then you have two options!
1. Put a cotton filter (a q-tip works) in the acetone mix and draw up the excess acetone with your syringe through the cotton. (Recommended)
 2. OR: Take a clean container with a new coffee filter covering the opening and wet the coffee filter with a bit of acetone. You can then pour in the contents of your shot glass. Save the coffee filter and scrape any residue from the shot glass.
- Let the acetone evaporate off and you can then retrieve your drugs from the coffee filter.

IMPORTANT! *Wait until your drugs are completely dry before using!* If they still smell like acetone, they aren't dry.

You can try hot plating—heating up a **(microwave safe! No metal!)** glass or ceramic plate in a microwave or oven until it's almost too hot to hold comfortably—to speed up the drying off process if it's taking awhile and you're feeling impatient.

Make sure not to apply heat directly to your drugs when heating your hot plate—as previously mentioned, acetone is flammable! Put the drugs on the plate **only** after it's been warmed up by itself.

End notes

- So why does the dried acetone need to be stored in a sealed container? Acetone is **hygroscopic**, meaning it absorbs moisture readily from the air. If you leave it sitting uncovered for long, your acetone will start absorbing the moisture out of the ambient air. So keep it closed when you're not using it! Note that this does also mean that you may need to re-dry your acetone eventually, especially if you've left it unsealed for prolonged periods or topped it off.

Sources:

<https://bluelight.org/xf/threads/simple-acetone-wash-for-meth-amphetamines-and-cocaine-pics-inside.725015/>

<https://melmagazine.com/en-us/story/what-is-cocaine-cut-with-2>

<http://tripproject.ca/increasing-the-purity-of-street-drugs/>